

The Red Years of *Cahiers du Cinéma*
(1968-1973)

The Red Years of *Cahiers du Cinéma*
(1968-1973)

Volume I: Ideology and Politics

Daniel Fairfax

Amsterdam University Press

The publication of this book is made possible by a grant from the Forschungszentrum historische Geisteswissenschaften at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 850 8 (Vol. I)

ISBN 978 94 6372 860 7 (Vol. II)

ISBN 978 94 6372 101 1 (set)

e-ISBN 978 90 4854 390 8 (Vol. I)

e-ISBN 978 90 4854 391 5 (Vol. II)

DOI 10.5117/9789463728508

NUR 674 | 757



Creative Commons License CC BY NC ND

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0>)

© D. Fairfax / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2021

Some rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, any part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise).

Table of Contents

Volume I: Ideology and Politics

Acknowledgements	9
A Note on Translations	11
Introduction	13

Part I Theories of Ideology

1. “Cinéma/Ideologie/Critique”: An Epistemological Break?	45
2. Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni: Crossed Lives	71
3. <i>Décalages</i> : “ <i>Young Mr. Lincoln</i> de John Ford”	95
4. “La Vicariance du Pouvoir” and the Battle of <i>Othon</i>	125
5. “Technique et Ideologie” by Jean-Louis Comolli	149
6. Afterlives of the Apparatus	175

Part II Engagements with Politics

7. The Radicalization of <i>Cahiers</i> : 1963-1969	207
8. <i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> and the Rapprochement with the PCF: 1969-1971	237
9. <i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> ’s Turn to Maoism: 1971-1973	269
10. <i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> and Jean-Luc Godard	297
11. <i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> in the “Post-gauchiste” Era: 1973-1981	325

12. Bernard Eisenschitz: Cinema, Communism and History	359
13. Jean-Louis Comolli: A Theoretical Practice of Political Cinema	385

Volume II: Aesthetics and Ontology

Part III Questions of Aesthetics

14. Encounters with Structuralism	431
15. Beyond Structuralism: Film Form and <i>Écriture</i>	463
16. Re-reading Classical Cinema	493
17. The Defense and Critique of Cinematic Modernism	517
18. Encountering the World Through Cinema	543
19. The Film Aesthetics of Jacques Aumont	571
20. Two <i>Ciné-fils</i> : Pascal Kané and Serge Daney	597

Part IV Encounters with Ontology

21. The Bazinian Legacy	637
22. Jean-Pierre Oudart and Suture	665
23. Realism and Psychoanalysis in Pierre Baudry	695
24. Partial Vision: The Theory and Filmmaking of Pascal Bonitzer	717
25. The Brain is the Screen: <i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> and Gilles Deleuze	749
26. Film Ontology in the Age of “New” Media	775

Conclusion	803
Index of Names Cited	807

Acknowledgements

My first acknowledgements must go to the *Cahiers* critics themselves, who challenged me with their writings but also, without exception, welcomed my requests to speak with them about their personal histories. Jean-Louis Comolli, in particular, responded with unbounded generosity to my unsolicited email asking to translate *Cinéma contre spectacle* and has been a true friend since then. Jean Narboni, Jacques Aumont, Bernard Eisenschitz, Sylvie Pierre, Pascal Kané, Pascal Bonitzer and Serge Toubiana were equally ready to share their thoughts and stories on tape, as were other figures from this period such as Michel Delahaye (who has sadly since passed away), Jean Douchet, Jacques Bontemps, Serge Toubiana, Alain Bergala and Serge Le Péron. My only regret is that the deaths of Serge Daney and Pierre Baudry, and the tragic, mysterious fate of Jean-Pierre Oudart, prevented me from being able to talk with them. Likewise, Pascal Kané's recent passing away is a tragic loss, and I will treasure the moments shared with him, both when conducting interviews and in more informal settings.

This project has gone through many guises, but the most important shepherd throughout all the stages of its development was without a doubt Dudley Andrew, whose assistance in guiding the present book to its completion has been inestimable. He has been a generous and sagacious mentor, and his research on André Bazin was an inspiration for my own study of a later generation of *Cahiers* critics, so I have cherished the privilege of having such close input from him on my work. During my time at Yale University, Francesco Casetti, John Mackay, Charlie Musser, Aaron Gerow, Brigitte Peucker, Katie Trumpener, Carol Jacobs and Ron Gregg all made treasured contributions to my development as a scholar, teacher and a person. Many formative friendships were also forged in New Haven; I can't not mention those with Joshua Sperling, Luca Peretti, Michael Cramer, Jeremi Szaniawski, Patrick Reagan, Masha Shpoleberg, Grant Wiedenfeld, Moira Weigel, Ksenia Sidorenko, Jensen Suther, Mal Ahern, Jordan Brower, Annie Berke and Joshua Alvizu.

Since moving to the Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main I have been blessed to share a department with Vinzenz Hediger, after years of collaboration with him on the "Film Theory in Media History" book series. His dynamism and energy in so many domains are a credit to the field of film studies, while Rembert Hüser, Nikolaus Müller-Stahl, Laliv Melamed, Philipp Dominik Keidl, Sonia Campanini, Bettina Schulte-Strathaus and

Josefine Hetterich have made Theater, Film and Media Studies a lively and engaging department in which to work.

Further afield I would also like to thank Philip Rosen, Tom Conley, Jane Gaines, Trond Lundemo, Warren Buckland, André Habib, Antoine de Baecque, François Dosse, Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, Dana Polan, D.N. Rodowick, Laleen Jayamanne, Seung-hoon Jeong, Sam di Iorio, Paul Macovaz, Elif Sendur, Chrisa Blümlinger, Volker Pantenburg, Pierre Eugène and Marco Grosoli for their friendly help and guidance at various stages in this project and other associated ventures. Chuck Kleinhans and Philip Watts were also immensely helpful, and I along with so many other people will miss their interventions into the field. Perhaps the biggest recent loss for us all, however, has been that of Thomas Elsaesser. I was lucky enough to have him as a mentor and a friend over the last ten years, and I feel immensely privileged that this book will appear in his “Film Cultures in Transition” series, but it is inevitably shrouded in sadness with his death before its publication.

To my fellow current and former editors at *Senses of Cinema*, Rolando Caputo, Adrian Danks, Dan Edwards, Alex Heller-Nicholas, Mark Freeman, David Heslin, César Albarrán Tomas, Bradley Dixon and Fiona Villela, I want to thank you for providing Australia (and the world) with an outlet that, in its own modest way, continues the *Cahiers* mission of fostering original critical thinking on the cinema.

I can't express enough gratitude to Mum and Dad for everything they have given me, as well as to my wife Michelle for her love, support and inspiration, and finally Alex, who makes every day special.

A Note on Translations

The translation history of *Cahiers* texts is a complex matter, with competing versions of the texts available and a range of strategies adopted to render the vocabulary used by the journal into the English language. For the purposes of this book, I have made reference to the original French texts when it comes to documents written by the ten *Cahiers* critics under study. Often, existing English translations have been consulted, and where this is the case, I have indicated these documents as secondary references, but the quality of these translations is particularly variable. When possible, I have utilized them in my own renderings of the *Cahiers* writings into English, but this principle has been secondary to considerations of accuracy and consistency. In the case of “Technique et idéologie,” “Cinéma/idéologie/critique,” and *Cinéma contre spectacle*, I have used my own translations as published in the volume *Cinema against Spectacle: Technique and Ideology Revisited*. In other cases, I have freely modified existing translations when necessary, either to more faithfully render the meaning and flavor of the original text or to eliminate terminological variations between translations. Responsibility for the translation of quoted *Cahiers* material appearing in this book therefore falls entirely on my shoulders. In the case of non-*Cahiers* texts, standard translations have been used where these exist, with occasional modifications when this is necessary. In certain cases, the original French is included inside the quoted passage within square brackets when this information is judged to be of use.

